-1. A method for surveying distribution of proprietary empirical data sets, such as audio, image, or video data, on computer sites accessible via the internet, comprising:

automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, automatically screening same to identify the potential presence of identification data steganographically embedded therein;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets screened by said screening operation, discerning identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein; and

generating a report identifying steganographically empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded.

2. The method of claim 1 which includes providing a master code signal, and using said code signal in discerning said steganographically encoded identification data from said screened empirical data sets.

3. The method of claim 2 in which said master code signal has the appearance of unpatterned snow if represented in the pixel domain.

4. The method of claim 1 in which said discerning of identification data from said downloaded empirical data is accomplished without previous knowledge of the audio, image, or video information represented thereby.

5. The method of claim 1 which includes identifying proprietors of empirical data sets by reference to identification data steganographically discerned therefrom, and reporting to said proprietors the sites from which their empirical data sets were downloaded.

-6. The method of claim 5 in which said identification data includes information in addition to data identifying said proprietor, and the method includes providing said additional data to said proprietors.

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7. The method of claim 5 in which said identification data is a serial number index into a registry database containing names and contact information for proprietors identified by said identification data.

8. The method of claim 1 in which the empirical data sets include image data, and the method includes:

converting said image data to pixel form, if not already in said form; and

performing a plurality of statistical analyses on said pixel form image data to discern the identification data therefrom.

9. The method of claim 8 in which each statistical analysis includes analyzing a collection of spaced apart pixels to decode a single, first bit of the identification data therefrom, said analysis to decode the first bit encompassing not just said spaced apart pixels, but also pixels adjacent thereto, said adjacent pixels not being encoded with said first bit.

10. A method for surveying distribution of proprietary empirical data sets on computer sites accessible via the internet, comprising:

providing a master code signal useful for detecting steganographic coding within empirical data sets;

automatically downloading data, including empirical data sets, from a plurality of computer sites over the internet;

for each of a plurality of empirical data sets obtained by said downloading operation, discerning certain identification data, if any, steganographically encoded therein, said discerning employing said master code signal as a decoding key; and

generating a report identifying steganographically empirical data sets identified by the foregoing steps, and the site from which each was downloaded.--